ॐ श्रीः ॐ

My understanding of SRIMADBHAGAVATAM

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Sobhakrutu Sravana Poornima
31-08-2023
Mumbai

An Appeal to the august and learned readers

During our childhood days in 1950-60 decades, all we brothers used to wait eagerly upon our father for after dinner tales. My father was erudite in Sanskrit and Telugu and an excellent orator and story teller. We had the good fortune of listening to complete episodes of Ramayanam, Bharatam and Bhagavatam. He used to enthrall us with the story of Ramayanam or Bharatam in one continuous saga of Sri Ramachandra and Kaurava Pandavas respectively, But from Bhagavatam he was enumerating series of tales of different devotees e.g., rescuing the elephant from the clutches of Crocodile (Gajendra *Moksham*), Killing the demon Hiranyaksha (Varahavataram), the story of Pious Prahlada and killing of the demon Hiranyakasipu (Nrisimhavataram), Episode of demon king Bali and restoring heaven back to Indra (Vamanavatram), story of Parasurama, Dhruva *charitra*, Saga of King of Ambarisha, and the enchanting tales of Sri Krishna. We inquisitively asked our father, "unlike Ramayanam and Bharatam, why is Bhagavatam is a compendium of different stories, *appa*?" (We used to address our father as *appa*.) Appreciating our inquisitiveness, father smilingly replied that Bhagavatam describes elaborately the unique concept of Paramatma (God Almighty) and His different manifestations or incarnations and His untiring efforts to make us understand the concept of 'oneness' of the God Almighty (*Ekobrahma)*. Perhaps it is only in our culture that each individual has the right to have her/his own perception of God. And the God Almighty is also willing and happy to grant the wish and appear before the individual as per her/his perception. In fact, the God neither has a name nor a definite complexion (*Rupam*). Bhagavatam is an anthology of different incarnations God Almighty takes to address a particular need at that time. That is why the tome seems to be a collection of different stories but in reality the entire treatise is about a one and only God. That way Bhagavatam is also similar to Ramayanam and Bharatam. In addition, Bhagavatam also preaches the people the good practices of an ideal life full of simplicity, compassion and devotion. Even in school text books we can see this uniqueness of Bhagavatam.

From that time, I was agog and decided to read Bhagavatam in its entirety. I could realise that desire only after sixty years, thanks to the blessings of the Almighty. Besides, a kind and an affectionate gift of all volumes of Andhra Bhagavatam by my twin brother Karanam Krishnakumar made it possible. I could come to knowledge of so many interesting aspects and wanted to place before you all that I could understand. This small booklet is an attempt in that direction. To a large extent I followed the text of Bhagavatam written in Telugu by Bammera Potana.

I shared the first draft written in Telugu and have been benefited by the constructive comments from many literati. I am indebted to Sarvasri Vemuri Venkata Ramakrishna, Karanam Vasudeva Rao, Rayapeddi Appasesha Sastri, Mamillapalli Venugopala Sharma, and Karanam Sampath Kumar, who were kind enough to let their knowledge and wisdom help me in revising the Booklet. Some of them also suggested that an English version of the text may be desirable for wider dissemination. Even though I do not have scholarly knowledge in English language, with my limited literary skills I ventured to put my thoughts on Bhagavatam and what I understood by reading the sacred book in Telugu. I also downloaded the Sanskrit text from the internet site

www.sanskritdocuments.org. In addition, I studied some of the English translations by Esteemed Anand Aadhar (Netherlands) and also by reverend A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. I was also fortunate to get access to some of the internet sites (Raja Tirtha and ISCON) for gaining insights into the holy text. If there are any mistakes, errors, they are entirely mine due to my inability to understand and interpret the holy text. Added difficulty is translation into English which is not my mother tongue. Many of the nuances in expression in the native tongue are lost in translation. I seek the indulgence of the discerning readers.

At the lotus feet of the most and ever benevolent God Almighty,
Karanam Lakshminarayan Ramakumar

Introduction

Concentrating on the Lotus feet of Lord Shiva
Offering obeisance to Adi Sankara
Showing my humble respects to all the Gurus
I venture to understand Srimadbhagavatam

Srimadbhagavaram describes in detail, different, myriad manifestations of the God Almighty. It is the best and most famous and occupies numero uno position among the eighteen Mahapuranas. For the benefit and welfare of the mankind and the mortal world, Maharshi Veda Vyasa, one of the incarnations of the Lord himself, wrote this epic and beckoned his illustrious son Sri Suka to study the holy text.

King Parikshit, the grandson of Pandavas, comes to know of his imminent death within seven days due to the curse of a Brahmin Rishi and decides to spend his time in strict austerity. Sri Suka arrives and preaches the entire Bhagavatam to King Parikshit and this helping him attain salvation. The Sanskrit text of Bhagavatam written by Maharshi Veda Vyasa was translated into Telugu by Bammera Potana in fifteenth century. It is not exaggeration if one says that there is no single house in Andhra Pradesh where people do not know at least a single stanza of Andhra Bhagavatam. Like in Sanskrit text, Telugu Bhagavatam also has twelve Skandhas. There are altogether 9008 verses including prose. Out of these, about 36% (3262 verses and prose) in 10^{th} and 11^{th} Skandhas deal with SriKrishna. That could be the reason why many a time Bhagavatam is treated as Sri Krishna Charitra. The Sanskrit text also consists of twelve Skandhas totaling 335 chapters (adhyayas) and 18,000 verses. The tenth book, with about 4,000 verses, has been the most popular and widely studied.

Another thing to be noted is that Andhra Bhagavatam is not word-to-word translation of the Sanskrit text. Bammera Potana might have resorted to free translation keeping in mind the essence of the Sanskrit text. All other language texts of Bhagavatam came after Bammera Potana's Telugu text. Potana was helped by three more poets in translation Bhagavatam. These are Bopparaju Ganganarya (he translated the 5^{th} Skandha into two chapters), Elchuri Singanarya (6^{th} Skandha), and Veligandala Naraayanarya (11^{th} and 12^{th} Skandhas).

Uniqueness of Bhagavatam

Bhagavatam is unique. If Srimad-Bhagavatam is read in its entirety, this magnum opus seems to be a storehouse of many interesting things along with the various incarnations and Leela features of the Supreme Lord. In addition, this tome also deals with other such aspects as *sattvic* living, living harmoniously in society, the relationship between God and living beings. Reading Bhagavatam is essential for proper understanding of the Supreme Being. That understanding is possible only through devotion and undivided concentration. In a way Bhakti is the inner soul of Bhagavatam. The nine paths of devotion are described in the Bhagavatam. In the 7th Skandha of Srimad Bhagavatham, these nine forms of bhakti are very elegantly and beautifully elaborated. Prahlada, in response to his father Hiranya Kasipu's queries describes the nine paths of Bhakti.

श्रवणं कीर्तनं विष्णोः स्मरणं पादसेवनम्

अर्चनं वन्दनं दास्यं सख्यम आत्मनिवेदनम् (7th Skandha, 5th Adhyaya 23rd Sloka: (1-5-23))

1. Sravana – Hearing the Lord's virtues, glories and stories
2. Kirtana – Singing of the Lord's Glories
3. Smarana – Remembrance of the Lord at all times
4. Padasevana – Serving the Lord's Feet
5. Archana – Worship of the Lord
6. Vandana – Prayer and prostration unto the Lord
7. Dasya Bhakti – Servant sentiment with God
8. Sakhya Bhakti – Friendship sentiment with God
9. Atma-Nivedana – Self-surrender to God

The nine modes of Bhakti are the ways in which a devotee attains the Supreme Ideal of Life. Any devotee can take up any of these paths and reach the highest state. The path of Bhakti is the easiest of all and is not very much against the nature of the human inclinations. It slowly and gradually takes the individual to the Supreme without frustrating his human instincts. It is not direct assertion of God, but a progressive realisation of Him.

The most important and potent message Bhagavatam Gives us

There are no multiple deities or Gods. There is one and only one Paramatma. Whichever name we take and whichever form we visulaise, Paramatma manifests by that name and in that form and blesses us. King Yudhishtir along with his brothers and Sri Krishna goes to see Bhishma who is lying on the bed of arrows awaiting salvation. At that time Bhishma while praying Sri Krishna brings out the concept of oneness of God so beautifully. He says:

> "*Just like the Sun is perceived differently by different living creatures, the one and only one Paramatma is perceived by different people with different names and forms. I show mt obeisance to that Great Paramatma*." (1-9-42)

This prayer of Bhishma has special significance in understanding the Paramatma. That Paramatma appears in different manifestations names and forms as visualised by individuals. We all know water has no shape and it takes the shape of the vessel it is poured into. Paramatma is just like that He takes the form the individual wants.
The words Paramatma or Parabrahma are to be interpreted to mean that Nirakara, Nirguna and Nirvikara and all other names like Sri Hari, Vishnu, Siva and others are to be taken as only additional names given to this Paramatma. Studying Bhagavatam provides irrefutable evidence and convincing answers to the contentious debates that are pervading over the God Almighty. After writing Bhagavatam, Maharshi Veda Vyasa had mental peace. If one reads this holy text, mental peace is guaranteed.

In this small monograph, an attempt has been made to highlight such interesting information to understand Paramatma.

"Just like the Sun is perceived differently by different living creatures, the one and only one Paramatma is perceived by different people with different names and forms. I show mt obeisance to that Great Paramatma." (1-9-42)

What I understood from Srimadbhagavatam – 2

Karanam Lakshminarayana Ramakumar

In this second part, I will dwell on the origin of Bhagavatam, Bhagavatam in four slokas or Chatussloki Bhagavatam, attributes of Puranas, and main incarnations of Paramatma.

Origin of Bhagavatam and Chatussloki Bhagavatam

Origin of Bhagavatam is described in the 2nd Skandha. Brahmadeva, before starting creation exercise, does severe penance to seek the blessings of Paramatma. Paramatma appears before Brahmadeva and bestows Brahmadeva the essence of Bhagavatam in just four slokas. These four slokas are the basis of entire Bhagavatam and are referred to as Chatussloki Bhagavatam. This essence is transferred sequentially from Brahmadeva to Sage Narada, Narada to Maharshi Veda Vyasa, Vyasa to his son Sri Suka and Sri Suka to King Parikshit.

Sage Narada beseeches his father Brahmadeva for enlightenment on the creation of worlds by '*Viratpurusha*'. In response, Brahmadeva teaches Narada the essence of Bhagavatam in four slokas as given to him by Paramatma. Brahmadeva also says that Bhagavatam is one of the Mahapuranas. These four slokas are now referred to as Chatussloki bhagavatam. These four slokas are given below (2-9-32 to 2-9-35):

अहमेवासमेवाग्रे नान्यद्यत्सदसत्परम् ।
पश्चादहं यदेतच्च योऽवशिष्येत सोऽस्म्यहम् ॥ ३२॥
ऋतेऽर्थं यत्प्रतीयेत न प्रतीयेत चात्मनि ।
तद्विद्यादात्मनो मायां यथाभासो यथा तमः ॥ ३३॥
यथा महान्ति भूतानि भूतेषूच्चावचेष्वनु ।
प्रविष्टान्यप्रविष्टानि तथा तेषु न तेष्वहम् ॥ ३४॥
एतावदेव जिज्ञास्यं तत्त्वजिज्ञासुनाऽऽत्मनः ।
अन्वयव्यतिरेकाभ्यां यत्स्यात्सर्वत्र सर्वदा ॥ ३५॥

A rough translation of the above four slokas is as follows:

(Paramatma says to Brahmadeva)

It was I who existed before the creation when there was nothing else, when there was nothing of the cause and effect of the Supreme. And it is also Me who of all that was created remains in the end, that is what I am.

That what appears to be valuable, is not so if it does not relate to Me. Also know that illusory energy of Mine is a mere reflection of darkness.

Just like the elements of the universe are present in minute to gigantic size, know that it is I who is present in them as well as outside of them. (I am inside and at the same time outside of each and every element I created.)

A truth seeker searching after the Supreme Absolute Truth, the Paramatma, has to search for it untiringly under all circumstances, and in all space and time, and both directly and indirectly. (This absolute truth is immutable.)

We can see similarity between Bhagavad-Gita and Bhagavatam. Both of them were given to us by God Almighty Himself. The essence of Bhagavad Gita or the attribute to Paramatma is condensed in a single word 'Om Tatsat' in 23rd sloka of 17th Adhyaya. Similarly, the essence of Bhagavatam or the attribute to Paramatma is condensed in just four slokas. In that way both these holy texts are very unique and distinct.

Attributes of Puranas

Attributes of Puranas are explained in 2nd and 12th Skandhas. In 2nd Skandha, Brahmadeva, while praising Bhagavatam, observes that Bhagavatam has all the 10 attributes of Puranas.
The very first sloka of the 10th Adhyaya in the 2nd Skandha names the ten qualities or attributes of Purana.

अत्र सर्गो विसर्गश्च स्थानं पोषणमूतयः ।
मन्वन्तरेशानुकथा निरोधो मुक्तिराश्रयः ॥

1. Sargam: Primary creation of universe, five basic elements, sensory organs
2. Visargam: Creation of life of all types
3. Sthanam: Maintaining Planetary Order and protection of Universe
4. Poshanam: Protection of dharmic life by Paramatma
5. Utu: Effect and influence of past life actions in the current life
6. Manvantaras: The sequence of reigns of all Manus
7. Eesanukathas: Description of incarnations of Paramatma and the lives of devotees
8. Nirodham: Renunciation of all material things
9. Mukti: Union with Paramatma
10. Asraya: Paramatma is the source of creation, sustenance and destruction. His shelter is Asraya.

Great souls, sages, taking recourse to Vedic texts, argue that following the first nine qualities offer a clear understanding of the tenth quality.
Starting from 11th sloka and subsequent 10 slokas in the seventh adhyaya in 12th Skandha elaborate the ten qualities of Puranas. Sage Suta while answering queries from Saunaka and other Rishis, says that according to some, Puranas have 10 qualities while others limit the qualities only to 5. He also proceeds to recall that Maha Puranas have ten qualities. In the 2nd Skandha it is mentioned that Bhagavatam is Maha Purana. Therefore, it has all the ten qualities.

Even though Bhagavatam is called Maha Purana, other subjects such as mathematics, social science, medical science are also included. Within this Maha Purana, Maharshi Veda Vyasa passed on to us information on other subjects. It could be that in ancient times all the subjects

are being dealt with under a single heading 'philosophy'. Even now irrespective of the specialization, Doctor of Philosophy degree is bestowed. We will discuss these other subjects in later chapters.

Eighteen Maha Puranas

Reference to the number of Maha Puranas is given in the seventh adhyaya of 12th Skandha. These are (1) Brahma Purana, (2) Padma Purana, (3) Viṣṇu Purana, (4) Śiva Purana, (5) Liṅga Purana, (6) Garuḍa Purana, (7) Nārada Purana, (8) Bhāgavata Purana, (9) Agni Purana, (10 Skanda Purana, (11) Bhaviṣhya Purana, (12) Brahma-vaivarta Purana, (13) Mārkaṇḍeya Purana, (14) Vāmana Purana, (15) Varāha Purana, (16) Matsya Purana, (17) Kūrma Purana and (18) Brahmāṇḍa Purana.

It may be noted that the list as given in Bhagavatam does not include Sri Devi Bhagavatam as one of the Maha Puranas.

Important and main contents in each of the Skandhas

All the qualities of Maha Puranas may be seen in entire Bhagavatam.

1st Skandha

Bhishma Stuti, Kunti Stuti, passing away of Bhishma, Birth of Parikshit, passing away of Gandhari and Dhritarashtra, passing away of Sri Krishna, Great and final journey of Pandavas, Sage Shringi curses Parikshit, Parikshit decides to go on 7-day austerity, arrival of Rishi Suka

2nd Skandha

Conversation between Sri Suka and King Parikshit, Understanding about Paramatma, Uniqueness and specialty of Bhagavatam, Chatussloki Bhagavatam, attributes of Bhagavatam, Initiation of creation by Brahmadeva

3rd Skandha

Sage Vidura's pilgrimage, passing away of Sri Krishna, Debate between Vidura and Markandeya, Creation of universe, Knowledge of concept of time, Birth of Swayabhu Manu, Sri Varahavataram, Sanaka Sanandanas visit Vaikunth, Curse on Jaya, Vijaya, Kardama Maharshi Charitra, Birth of Sage Kapila Maharshi

4th Skandha

Destruction of Daksha Yagna, Story of Dhruva, Emperor Prithu charitra, Details of Prachesatas. Rudra Gita, Story of Puranjana

5th Skandha

1st Chapter: Lineage of Priyavrata, son of Swayambhu Manu

2nd Chapter: detailed description of seven dwipas (islands), seven oceans, mountains surrounding these islands and oceans, description of different land masses in these islands, rivers, nine planets including Sun and Moon, Simsumara Chakramu, seven Netherlands, description of hell

6th Skandha

Story of Ajamila, Daksha curses Narada, creation of different living things, Brihaspati, Guru of Deities disappears, battle between deities and demons, Viswarupa becomes Guru of deities, Killing of Viswarupa by Devendra, Story of Vritrasura, story of Nahusha, Story of Chitraketu

7th Skandha

Hiranyaksha, HiranyaKasipu and Prahlada charitra, story of Suyagna, annihilation of Tripurasura, story of Ajagara, Past life of Narada, (Suka rishi informs king Parikshit that all the stories mentioned in the 7th Skandha were narrated by Narada to Yudhistir)

8th Skandha

Gajendra Moksham, Churning of ocean of milk, description of Kurmavatara, Mohini avatara, story of Vamana, Matsyavataram

9th Skandha

Story of king Ambarisha, Bhagiratha's effort and fetching Ganga from heaven to earth, Story of Sri Rama, Parasurama, story of Yayati and Devayani, Jadabharata Charitra, Rishyasringa Charitra, details of Yadava lineage, Sun lineage, Moon lineage

10th Skandha

Birth of Sri Krishna, Childhood description of Sri Krishna and his Leelas, Killing of Kamsa, Sri Krishna Rukmini marriage, Killing of Jarasandha, Sisupala, birth of Pradyumna, marriage of Aniruddha with Usha, Balarama goes on pilgrimage, story of Kuchela (Sudama), Description of Yadu dynasty

11th Skandha

Sri Krishna preaches Uddhava, Sri Krishna and Balarama return of Vaikuntha

12th Skandha

Sri Suka describes future kingdoms to King Parikshit, details of kings in Kaliyuga, characteristics of Kaliyuga, death of King Parikshit, Janamejaya performs Sarpayagam

Main incarnations of Paramatma

During my childhood, we learnt about 10 incarnations of Paramatma. These are: Matsyavataram, Kurmavataram, Varahavataram, Brisimhavataram, Vamanavataram, Parasuramavataram, Ramavataram, krishnavataram (Balaramavataram), Buddhavataram, Kalkyavataram.

In Bhagavatam, there is a mention of 21 incarnations of Paramatma. The aim of each of these incarnations is different.

1. Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumara, Sanatsujata: These are also incarnation of Paramatma, dedicated to constant praying
2. Varahavataram: Killing of Hiranyaksha and lifting out the earth from Netherland.
3. Narada: preached Vaishnava dharma
4. Nara and Narayana: Self realisation through penance
5. Kapilavataram: preached Tatvagnanam through Sankhya yoga
6. Dattatreya: preached Atmagnanam to Prahlada
7. Yagna: Rescued Swayamnhu Manu

8. Rishabh: preached path of salvation to others (This Rishabh was one of the tirthnakaras of Jainism)
9. Emperor Prithu: milked all nourishments from mother Earth who took the form of cow. He is the aboriginal emperor
10. Matsyavatram: rescued Vaivasvata Manu from the great flood and deluge during Chakshusa Manu period
11. Kurmavataram: Paramatma took the form of Turtle and helped the Deities and demons in churning ocean of milk for getting Amrit
12. Dhanvantari: Rose out of ocean of milk during its churning by deities and demons. He holds 'Amrit Kalash' in hand
13. Mohini avataram: distributed Amrit among deities
14. Nrisimhavataram: Salvation of Hiranyakasipu (Prahlada charitra)
15. Vamanvataram: Salvation of Bali
16. Parasuramavataram: annihilation of wicked Kshatriya kings 21 times
17. Maharshi Veda Vyasa: Delineation of Vedas, wrote Bharatam, Bhagavatam and other Ashtadasa Puranas for the benefit of people
18. Sriramavataram: Salvation of Ravana and Kumbhakarna
19. Balaramavataram and Krishnavataram: Protection of Dharma
20. Buddhavataram: preached universal peace and harmonious living
21. Kalkyavataram: killing of cruel and wicked people at the end of Kaliyuga.

It is pertinent to note that these incarnations are not meant solely and only to punish the cruel people but also for preaching the righteous path to realise Paramatma.

What I understood from Srimadbhagavatam – 3

Karanam Lakshminarayana Ramakumar

There is one and only one God Almighty (Paramatma) 'Ekobrahma'

The all-important message Bhagavatam gives is about oneness of God Almighty. Paramatma is ONE. By whichever name we refer Him and whichever form we perceive Him, He appears before us accordingly and blesses us. At the same time, Bhagavatam teaches us in an eloquent manner effectively how may we perceive that Paramatma, who is supposed to have no name, no form (nirakara or nirupa) with our inner eye and experience His presence. Just like many branches of rivulets emerge from a single large lake, many incarnations or avataras emanate from the one and only Paramatma for the welfare of the universe.

Paramatma is an undefinable entity. His different avataras or incarnations (Troika of Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, or whichever name we think of) help us in experiencing the undefinable entity of Paramatma. Just like the way all the river waters and the water rained at different places flow into ocean, all our prayers coming from different corners and places ultimately reach that Paramatma only.

It is difficult for us to stare at vacuum and imagine that formless entity namely Paramatma. In order to inculcate concentration and steady and constant devotion to God Almighty, learned scholars and the Vedantis attribute all the characteristics of Paramatma to different deities. We are having the idols of all these deities and offer our obeisance to them but unfortunately more often than not we are not able to experience that undefinable Entity of Paramatma. What is required is unconditional surrender, constant and untiring inner effort to realise that undefinable Entity. This has been emphasised umpteen times in Bhagavatam. Discussions between Brahma and Narada, Maitreya and Vidura, Maharshi Kapila and his daughter Devahuti, and even by Vritrasura and Hiranyakasipu, who despite being born as demons are depicted as illustrious philosophers in the know of Paramatma.

One of the names of Lord Vishnu in Sri Vishnu Sahasranama Stotram is a beautiful name Adhokshaja (अधोक्षज). It is the 417th name in stanza 44.

वैकुंठः पुरुषः प्राणः प्राणदः प्रणवः पृथुः

हिरण्यगर्भश्शतृघ्नो व्याप्तो वायुरधोक्षजः

There are many interpretations and anubhavams of erudite scholars and saints. One of the interpretations (I should say the anubhavam of Adi Sankara) given by Adi Sankara for the Name 'Adhokshaja'

He who is perceived when the sense organs (aksha gaNa-s) are made inward-looking is Adhokhaja.

Please look inwardly to perceive the Lord. Please look inwardly to perceive what you want to be! When the former is possible there should not be any iota of doubt that the latter is not possible!

In 6th Adhyaya of Bhagavad-Gita (Atmasamyama Yoga), there is an interesting debate between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, which is very pertinent to experience Paramatma. It involves quite an ordeal of controlling one's mind. Sri Krishna says:

शनैः शनैरुपरमेद् बुद्ध्या धृतिगृहीतया ।

आत्मसंस्थं मनः कृत्वा न किञ्चिदपि चिन्तयेत् ॥ ६-२५॥

Little by little he should aim at achieving quietude by the intellect held firmly; having made the mind establish itself in the Self, not thinking of anything.

यतो यतो निश्चरति मनश्चञ्चलमस्थिरम् ।

ततस्ततो नियम्यैतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥ ६-२६॥

From whatever cause the restless, unsteady mind wanders away, restrain it and bring it under the control.

Note Arjuna's dilemma in the next stanza

चञ्चलं हि मनः कृष्ण प्रमाथि बलवद् दृढम् ।

तस्याहं निग्रहं मन्ये वायोरिव सुदुष्करम् ॥ ६-३४॥

The mind verily is restless, turbulent, strong and unyielding, O Krishna! I deem it as difficult to control as to control the wind.

To which Sri Krishna responds

असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।

अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥ ६-३५॥

Undoubtedly, O mighty-armed Arjuna, the mind is difficult to control and restless; but, by practice and by dispassion it may be restrained!

असंयतात्मना योगो दुष्प्राप इति मे मतिः ।

वश्यात्मना तु यतता शक्योऽवाप्तुमुपायतः ॥ ६-३६॥

I think that Dhyana is hard to be attained by one of uncontrolled self, but the Self-controlled and striving one attains to it by the (proper) means.

Sri Krishna emphsises on constant practice with dedication and commitment and then only realizing Adhokshaja inwardly would become possible.

Bhagavatam is very clear in articulating the concept of Paramatma and how all other deities like Sri Krishna are subservient to the Ultimate One. However great may be the personalities their life's events are dictated by Paramatma. This is beautifully illustrated when Yudhistir along with his brothers and Sri Krishna visits Bhishma lying on the bed of arrows. (1st Skandha, 9th Adhyaya). Seeing Yudhistir, Bhishma says:

> *"Oh how painful and unjust it has been for you good souls, sons of righteousness, to have had such a life of suffering you never really deserved.*
> *After the death of Pāṇḍu, when you were still tender of age, your mother Kunti had to suffer a great deal and that continued even after you boys had grown up.*
> *Consider these facts: Yudhishtir, the mighty king is ably assisted by his warrior brothers Bhima with his powerful mace and Arjuna with his potent Gandiva bow and above all*

none other than Lord Sri Krishna is with Pandavas constantly protecting them, but still they had to undergo innumerable sufferings! Could there be anything more ironical than this!
No one may fathom Paramatma. No one can understand what He does, why He does, when He does and how He does. Even His own incarnations and erudite scholars and great philosophers who are engaged in exhaustive debates, meekly surrender to Him."

It is very clear from the above observations of Bhishma that everything is executed as per the wish and desire of the Ultimate One, the Paramatma. Not even his incarnations have any say in this.

As mentioned previously Paramatma is to be perceived and experienced. How can this be done is elegantly explained in the discussion between Brahmadeva and sage Narada. In this discussion we come across many names of God Almighty which we normally use (Sri Hari, Sri Krishna etc.) All these are used to refer Paramatma only. All the Manus, Indra, other deities, Rishis perform their activities as per His dictums. He is the one who is immutable. As Yogi, He teaches Yoga, as Muni He demonstrates all the daily 'anushtanams', as Prajapati (Brahma), He is the Creator, as Indra, He conquers the demons, as 'Siddha" He preaches Gnana, as Yama or Kala, He annihilates. That undefinable Paramatma is perceived only through Proxy deities of different names and forms.

Debate between King Parikshit and Suka Maharshi

(2nd Skandha, 4th Adhyaya slokas 6-10)

King Parikshit implores Suka Maharshi, "*Oh, the holy master, please be kind to explain to me how the all- pervading Paramatma, that Sri Hari (please note King Parikshit refers Paramatma as Sri Hari, the name we are so familiar with!) is creating this universe, sustaining it and later annihilating? He is all powerful and with what powers he assumes different forms such as Brahma, Indra and others and entertains Himself? If Paramatma is the Ultimate One, what is the necessary for Him to adopt so many different manifestations? What are the consequences if He does not do all these things? Oh all-knowing Maharshi, please be kind to enlighten me!"*

Before answering the King, Suka Maharshi prays Paramatma: "*My obeisances to the Supreme Personality, who is beyond the comprehension of all beings and Nature, who indulges in the pastime of creation, sustenance and annihilation through the Troika (Brahma, Vishnu and Siva), and who is residing within all existing (living and non-living) things and whose ways are inconceivable*." It is pertinent to note that according to Sri Suka Maharshi, Paramatma is beyond the Troika of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. After paying obeisance to Paramatma, Suka Maharshi recounts King Parikshit the debate between Brahma and Sage Narada. (2nd Skandha 5th Adhyaya)

Sage Narada once requests Brahma for knowledge about creation of the universe, how was it started, who initiated, why was it initiated, when was it initiated and why was it initiated. He

further desired to know from Brahma whether he is the Prabhu (Lord) or any other superior personality exists above him directing him. If he is the Lord, what was the benefit he was looking for in the process of creation. What were the origins of all the things (both living and non-living) being created, how were they sustained and where would they get vanished. If, on the other hand Brahma says that there is another superior under whose guidance and benevolence, the creation is being effected, how does that superior look like. He, humbly beseeches Brahma for this knowledge so that he, in turn can share the knowledge among the deserved ones for their upliftment.

In response, Brahma replies that there is indeed a superior to him who is the real architect of all that is being created. He is the Lord of Brahma, of Narada and of the entire universe. Nothing exists that excludes him. He is Dharma, Sattva, and knowledge and wisdom. As per His wish, he (Brahma) started creation, Lord Vishnu sustains and Lord Siva annihilates. That aboriginal Entity namely Paramatma is the root source and only on Him the entire universe rests.

Thus, Bhagavatam in very clear terms brings out the concept of Paramatma who is the aboriginal Entity. Under His express guidance and order, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva perform their activities and duties.

In the debate between Brahma and Narada, we come across names such as Siva, Vishnu, Sri Hari being used quite frequently for describing Paramatma. Instead of going by the routine meanings of them, we should interpret them from their roots. Siva means piousness and Visnu means omnipresence. That way these words aptly define Paramatma.

Paramatma is ever willing and always eager to let all the people comprehend Him. His untiring efforts are seen throughout Bhagavatam. Even at the end of 11th Skandha as Sri Krishna He preaches Uddhava. People, according to their rituals and practices, ascribe certain form to Paramatma and worship that form not realising that that form represents Paramatma. Knowledge seekers who understand this and engage in constant worship the idols keeping in mind that they represent Paramatma are the blessed souls. In this world, all of us are fickle minded letting our concentration drifting away. Even though we have the Idols in front of them, during worship we lack concentration and capability to visualise Paramatma in that idol. Idol is not important what id absolutely essential is this unwavering concentration or Dhyana. Until and unless we work towards achieving that, we are all simply drifting away.
According to me, Paramatma is quite innocent and eternally optimist. He is always trying to let the people know different pathways to how to perceive, feel and experience Him. These untiring efforts of Paramatma, we can see throughout Bhagavatam. The first six Skandhas deal with this topic extensively and elaborately:

- The debates between Brahma-Narada, Vidura-Markandeya, Jada Bharata- King Rahu Gana of Sindhu Desa
- Preachings of Narada King Prachina Barhi,
- His own incarnations Yagna, Kapila Maharshi and Rishabh specifically to teach people,

— Even through intellectual discourses of demons like Vritrasura and Hiranyakasipu

Once Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was asked how can we see God Almighty?
Paramahamsa responded: “we never ask God Almighty how is he, how does he look like, we want to see you please appear before us. Instead, we never fail in asking him ‘Oh God, please bless us, give this give that.’ Not even once we ever asked God to appear before us. Poor God Almighty! Every time, it is disappointment for God. He is always waiting to hear that request from the people but it is not happening.”
Even through Bhagavatam, He did His might to inculcate people. His various incarnations and the stories of all the devotees are just stepping stones to realise Paramatma.

What I understood from Srimadbhagavatam – 4

Karanam Lakshminarayana Ramakumar

Demons who understood Paramatma

Studying Bhagavatam may clearly bring out the fact that even the so-called devious demons also have knowledge and the wisdom to dwell into the esoteric subject of Paramatma. To put it succinctly, demons like Vritrasura and Hiranyakasipu turned out to be enlightened souls and had a very clear concept of Paramatma.

Vritrasura

The episode of Vritrasura is mentioned in 9th to 12th Adhyayas of 6th Skandha. Twashtra Prajapati's son Viswarupa was killed by Indra. There upon Twashtra Prajapati got incensed and created Vritrasura by performing a severe Yagna. Vritrasura was an exception among the demons. One of the best cultured demons, Vritrasura has full knowledge of Parabrahma. Seeing his soldiers running away in the battle with Indra and other deities, Vritrasura expressed himself in words that were even attractive to the greatest minds: "*All who are born inevitably have to face death, wherever they might exist in the universe. There is no way to counter that in this world, a world offering someone the opportunity to reach a better world and be glorious. When it is impossible to escape death, who then would not accept a suitable way to die? There are two approved ways to die with honor in this world, and both are very rare. One is to be allowed to leave the body when one, engaged in yoga controlling the mind and senses, concentrates on Brahman (Paramatma), and the other is to take the lead on the battlefield and never turn one's back.*"

Thereafter Vritrasura confronts Indra who is holding the thunderbolt (Vajrayudha) in his hand. He says to Indra, "*Oh, Indra why don't you hurl the thunderbolt at me? By the force of your thunderbolt the rope of my material attachment will be cut. And when I give up this world I, with my mind fixed on the lotus feet of Paramatma, reach the destination of the ascetics, who are advanced in spiritual life He recognizes as His own. Thus saying, Vritrasura prays, 'Oh my Lord, shall I be reborn as a servant of Your servant whose only shelter is Your lotus feet? May my mind remember the transcendental qualities of You, oh Lord of my life, may my words be of praise and my body be engaged in working for You! I do not desire a place in heaven or the topmost position of Brahma, not to rule over the world nor to dictate the lower worlds. I do not desire the perfections of yoga nor to be freed from rebirth, oh source of all opportunity, all I want is not to be separated from You! my mind longs to see You.*"

Further, in the battle, when the Thunderbolt (Vajrayudha) slipped out of Indra's hand, Vritrasura says, "*Oh Indra, pick up your thunderbolt and kill me and do your duty. He gives Indra the knowledge and wisdom of Paramatma. Oh Indra, understand that all things depend on Īśa (the Ultimate One, Lord and master of Time constituting their life and coherence). Not knowing (Paramatma), one considers oneself to be the one in control. Different traits of goodness, passion*

and ignorance are found in material nature, they are not the qualities of the spiritual soul. He who knows the soul as the one in the position of the witness, will be free from bondage."

Indra hearing Vritrasura, picks up the thunderbolt and addressed him, "*Oh Dānava, with this kind of consciousness you have attained perfection. You are a devotee perfectly focussed on Paramatma. You managed to surmount the māyā of Lord Viṣṇu that deludes the common man. In your giving up the Asura mentality, you have obtained the position of an exalted devotee. You are in Vāsudeva, the Supreme Lord of pure goodness."*

Story of Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakasipu (2nd Adhyaya 7th Skandha)

Hiranyakasipu is another demon like Vritrasura who knows the concept of Paramatma. Learning that his brother Hiranyaksha was killed by Lord Vishnu incarnated as Sri Varaha, consoles his mother Diti, "*Oh mother, you should not lament over your son who met with glorious death. Just like different travelers, who meet at a shelter to satiate their thirst and thereafter go on their ways, we all have come together in this life and after the job is done, we will part again according to our karma. Just as trees being reflected in water can appear to be moving, one can also, by moving one's head [one's 'eyes'], have the illusion that the world is moving around. Paramatme is all pervading, He is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. He has no beginning and no end. Under His own created Illusion (Maya), He is seen as ever-changing but in reality, He is immutable. To substantiate further, Hiranyakasipu recounts the story of king Suyagna who got killed in a battle. When Suyagna's consorts were weeping, Yama himself comes and preached them. 'Oh, poor women, the Supreme Controller creates, by the exercise of His will, all of this without ever changing Himself and it is He who, next to that, also maintains and destroys. One says that all beings moving and not moving are involved in the game of the Lord, who is always fully entitled to maintain something or someone, or put an end to it all.' In this material world one only lacking in knowledge is obsessed with the meaning of this 'mine' and thine' of one's self-interest and the interest of others. For who is that actually, that soul of you and of the others?"* Diti, hearing the speech of the king of the Daityas promptly gave up her grief.

The one and only message from Bhagavatam is understand Paramatma and make every effort to reach Him. With that message in mind, if we study the holy text, even the preachings of Vritrasura and Hiranyakasipu help us in realising that Ultimate One.

What I understood from Srimadbhagavatam – 5

Karanam Lakshminarayana Ramakumar

Narada tells Dharmaraja about Varnashrama divisions

In the present times, the division of *varna* (*jati* or profession) in the society has been taken as the division of caste. Further, it was given the status of a hereditary right. In Srimad-Bhagavatam and Bhagavad Gita the process of division of varnashrama is very meaningful. If we can follow the Varnashrama dharma as given in these great scriptures, our community and society can see harmonious living. This in formation is given in the 11th adhyaya of 7th Skandha. In the form of debate between Narada and Dharmaraja.

Dharmaraja request Narada Maharshi to enlighten him about Sanatana Dharma (ancient prevalent and accepted as righteous activities) by which all people lead better and harmonious life.

Narada Maharshi tells Dharmaraja that Sanatana Dharma prescribes 30 general principles to be followed by all (Slokas 8-12 in 11th adhyaya of 7th Skandha):

सत्यं दया तपः शौचं तितिक्षेक्षा शमो दमः ।

अहिंसा ब्रह्मचर्यं च त्यागः स्वाध्याय आर्जवम् ॥ ८॥

सन्तोषः समदृक्सेवा ग्राम्येहोपरमः शनैः ।

नृणां विपर्ययेहेक्षा मौनमात्मविमर्शनम् ॥ ९॥

अन्नाद्यादेः संविभागो भूतेभ्यश्च यथार्हतः ।

तेष्वात्मदेवताबुद्धिः सुतरां नृषु पाण्डव ॥ १०॥

श्रवणं कीर्तनं चास्य स्मरणं महतां गतेः ।

सेवेज्यावनतिर्दास्यं सख्यमात्मसमर्पणम् ॥ ११॥

नृणामयं परो धर्मः सर्वेषां समुदाहृतः ।

त्रिंशल्लक्षणवान् राजन् सर्वात्मा येन तुष्यति ॥ १२॥

These 30 general principles to be followed by all human beings are (1) truthfulness, (2) mercy, (3) austerity (observing fasts on certain days of the month), (4) bathing twice a day, (5) tolerance, (6) discrimination between right and wrong, (7) control of the mind, (8) control of the senses, (9) nonviolence, (10) celibacy, (11) charity, (12) reading of scripture, (13) simplicity, (14) satisfaction, (15) rendering service to saintly persons, (16) gradually taking leave of unnecessary engagements, (17) observing the futility of the unnecessary activities of human society, (18) remaining silent and grave and avoiding unnecessary talk, (19) considering whether one is the body or the soul, (20) distributing food equally to all living entities (both men and animals), (21) seeing every soul (especially in the human form) as a part of the Supreme Lord, (22) hearing about the activities and instructions given by Paramatma, (23) chanting about these activities and instructions, (24) always remembering these activities and instructions, (25) trying to render service, (26)

performing worship, (27) offering obeisances, (28) becoming a servant, (29) becoming a friend, and (30) surrendering one's whole self.

Narada Maharishi explains Sanatana Dharma to Dharmaraja and talks about Varnashramas. People of all castes (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra) must practice these thirty qualities to realise Paramatma.

Under no circumstances should a person be identified as belonging to a particular Varna (Jati or profession) on the basis of birth in a race. Race of people should be determined on the basis of how the individual is practising all the necessary rituals specific to that race (Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas or Sudras). In other words, one does not become a Brahmin just by being born in the caste of Brahmins. Those who practise Vipra-dharma deserve to be called Brahmins, even if they are born in a different caste. The most important thing is that Varna dharma should be practised regularly and continuously. Then only they become eligible to be called as belonging to that race.

Vipra-dharma qualities are control of the mind, control of the senses, gentle nature, purity, penance, kindness, wisdom, forgiveness, devotion, cheerfulness. Contentment, and complete surrender to Paramatma.

Kshatriya varna characteristics are courage, patient, self-control, grace, generosity, righteousness, forgiveness, Acharyaseva, Achyutaradhana

Vaisya varna qualities are being faithful to deities and Grus, work for advancement in religious principles, economic development, and sense gratification towards dharma, Artha and Kama; and always endeavoring with expertise in earning money.

Shudra varna characteristics are abstinence from theft, cleanliness, devotion and sincerity, performing sacrifices without uttering mantras, always speaking the truth and giving all protection to the cows and fair living

In the Srimad Bhagavad Gita the Supreme Lord says to Arjuna

चातुर्वर्ण्यं मया सृष्टं गुणकर्मविभागशः ।

तस्य कर्तारमपि मां विद्ध्यकर्तारमव्ययम् ॥ ४-१३॥

The human beings in this universe are divided into four varnas according to their qualities and the deeds they do.

The fact that the race of people should be determined by the qualities and characteristics they practise is repeatedly revealed to us when Sage Suka explains to King Parikshit about the Manvantaras in the ninth Skandha. Among the sons of Vaivasvata Manu, who was a male, some of them became Brahmins. Nabhaga, the son of Dishti, became a Vaishya by Karma. Many people in Nabhaga's generation became Kshatriyas. Also, the descendants of Krita, who were born in Pururava Chakravarti's clan, adopted Brahminism. Praskanda, son of Medhatithi Maharaja, born in the Yayati clan, embraced Brahmanism.

The most important thing is that any varna dharma should be practiced regularly and continuously. Then only we can appreciate the real meaning of Varna.

What I learned from Srimad Bhagavatam-6

Karanam Lakshminarayana Ramakumar

Srimad Bhagavatam – Scientific knowledge

Although Srimad Bhagavatam is treated as Purana, mathematics, physics, social science and biology are enshrined in this book. Within the purana itself, Paramatma has also given us other sciences through Veda Vyasa Maharshi. Perhaps in earlier times all the sciences were not separate. Even nowadays, no matter the research done in any science, the degree awarded is always Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) only.

Fetal Growth as mentioned in Srimad Bhagavatam (Biology)

Maharshi Kapila explains to his mother Devahuti, the creation of the world by the Supreme Lord and also explains about the growth of the baby in the mother's womb. This is given in the 31st adhyaya of 3rd Skandha.

Five nights after the sperm fertilises the egg, it grows to the size of a tiny water bubble. On the tenth day It will grow to the size of plum fruit. After that it takes the shape of an egg. Head is formed at the end of first month. Legs and hands will start appearing in two months. Nails, hair, bones, skin and pores are formed in three months. By the fourth month, the all-important seven essential components or ingredients for body development; plasma, blood, muscle, fat, nerves, bones, and reproductive tissues. and brain are formed. Feeling of thirst and hunger occur in the fifth month. In the sixth month, covered by amnion (a thin membrane forming a sac around the fetus for protection), the baby turns right in the mother's womb. consciousness comes in the seventh month. Movements occur. In the tenth month, it turns upside down and is ready to come into the world.

This is how modern science describes childbirth (collected from internet https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/7247-fetal-development-stages-of-growth and presented in summary form)

After the fertilisation of the egg by the sperm, zygote is formed and rapidly develops into a blastocyst and gets attached to the uterus. In the first month, the face, eyes and body are formed. The heart also starts beating. During the second month the face gradually develops. Legs, arms, bones, brain, external organs and digestive tract begin to form. In the third month, hands, fingers, feet and toes are formed. Nails, ears and teeth also start coming out slowly. In the fourth month, hair, eyelashes and nails grow. The baby starts moving. In the fifth month, the mother-to-be can sense the movements of the baby. In the sixth month, the baby can open its eyelids and see. In the seventh month, the knowledge of responding to external sounds and light is acquired. By the end of eighth month, other than the lungs and brain, most other organs are well-formed and ready for birth. The ninth month is mostly about putting the finishing touch on growth and brain development and will turn upside down. In the tenth month, the baby is ready to come into the world.

Most of the infant growth described in the Srimad-Bhagavatam fits the description of modern science.

Srimad Bhagavatam – Characterization of Time (Physics)

Sage Maitreya explains to Vidura about the idea of creation by God and also elaborates on the nature of time (11th adhyaya, 3rd Skandha)

The smallest invisible particle is called *Paramanu*. When sun light is passing through, whatever smallest dust particle is seen to the naked eye, one sixth size of that particle is called *Paramanuvu*. The time taken by sun's rays to travel from one side to another on that *Paramanuvu* is called *Sukhmakala*.

Two Paramanuvus make one *anuvu.* Three *anuvus* make a *Trasarenuvu.*

Three trasarenuvus make one Trti. Hundred trtis are one Vedha

Three Vedhas are one Lavam, three Lavams are one Nimesha

Three Nimeshas is one Kshanam. Five Kshanams is a kaastham

Ten kaasthams are one laghuvu, fifteen laghuvus are one Nadi

Two Nadis are one Muhurtam, six nadis are a Praharam (yamamu or jamu).

Four jamus make the period from sunrise to sunset, four jamus are a night

A time measuring instrument ('water clock'). The description is given in 9th sloka of 11th adhyaya in 3rd Skandha.

द्वादशार्धपलोन्मानं चतुर्भिश्चतुरङ्गुलैः ।

स्वर्णमाषैः कृतच्छिद्रं यावत्प्रस्थजलप्लुतम् ॥ ९॥

Ancient measurement units are mentioned in the sloka. These are

Pala: six *palas* make about 400 grams

Masha: roughly 1 gram (about 0.970 gram)

Prasthah: another measuring unit; reoughly 2.75 kg. (for water it is equal to 2.75 litres)

A vessel is prepared of six *pala* weight (400 grams) of copper, and a hole is drilled at its bottom with a gold wire using four *Mashas* (about 3.8 grams) of gold drawn into a thin wire of about four-inches (or four fingers) long. Time required for about one *prasthah* (2.75 kg) of water to run down completely through that hole is called a Nadi (about half an hour).

Comparison of Bhagavata period time with today's units

One day is 24 hours 8 jamu

One jamu is 3 hours or 6 nadis

2 nadis are one muhurta or one hour

One nadi is 30 minutes

One Laghuvu is 2 minutes or 10 Kaashtamulu

One Kaashtamu is 12 seconds or 5 Kshanamulu

One Kshanamu is 2.4 seconds or three nimeshamulu

One nimeshamu is 0.41666 seconds or three Lavamulu

One Lavalmu is 0.13888 seconds or three vedhas

One vedha is 0.0463 seconds or one hundred tirutulu
One truti os 0.000463 seconds or three trasarenuvulu
One trasarenuvu is 0.00015 seconds or three anuvulu
One anuvu is 0.00005 seconds or two paramunuvulu
One paramanuvu is 0.000025 second

When defining such a short period of time, there might as well be proper instruments to measure it.

Srimad Bhagavatam – Division of Time, Solar Rotation, Zodiac Signs (Astronomy)

In Srimad Bhagavatam this topic is mentioned as Bha Gana subject in 21st adhyaya of 5th Skandha. Sun has three phases namely Uttarayanam, Dakshinayanam and Vishuvattu. In Uttarayanam the pace of Sun is slow, in Dakshinayanam rapid and in Vishuvattu he moves at constant speed during day as well as night. Thus, day and night are equal when the Sun transits in Aries and Libra during Vishuvattu. Daylight increases from Taurus to Cancer, then decreases until Virgo, and when the Sun is in Libra, day and night are equal. Day time decreases and night time increases from Scorpio to Capricorn. Then the night time decreases until Pisces and when the Sun is in Aries the day and night are equal.
One thing to remember here. These figures apply to the northern hemisphere. Vishvattu means Equinox in English, that is March 21 or 22, September 22 or 23. It is on these dates that the Sun enters the signs of Aries (March) and Tula (September). In Uttarayana, the sun moves north from the equator. From Aries (Vernal equinox) through Cancer (Sun's northernmost point in June) to Libra (September) and back to the equator (wanders until the Autumnal equinox). After that Dakshinayanam occurs from Libra to the end of Pisces. We may also recall that due to Earth’s inclination on its rotational axis, the duration of day and night changes depending on which hemisphere of the Earth (northern or southern) is facing the Sun. As explained in Srimad Bhagavatam, Uttarayana Dakshinayana Kala rotation is happening.

What I learned from Srimad Bhagavatam-7

Karanam Lakshminarayana Ramakumar

How India (Bharatvarsha) got its name

Bharatopakhyanam or story of Bharata is mentioned in 5th Skandha. This Bharata is also known as Jadabharata. He is the fifth generation in the lineage of Swayambhuva Manu. It was because of this Bharata's rule that the land which was earlier known as *Ajanaabham* came to be known as Bharatavarsham and not because of another mythological figure, Bharata, the son of Sakuntala and Dushyantha (described in 9th Skandha) as is often believed.

Fourteen Manvantaras (8th Skandham)

According to Srimad Bhagavatam, Devendra (or Indra), Devas and Saptarshis are all positions occupied by different individuals at different eons. In each Manvantara, the deserving persons are appointed separately for those posts. In the first Manvantara, everything is Supreme. Appointments were made to these posts from the second Manvantara.

1 Swayambhu Manu

2 Svarochishisha: *Rochana* became Indra. *Tushits* etc. are deities. *Urjasthamba* etc. became Saptarshis.

3 Uttama: *Satyajittu* became Devendra. *Satyas, Bhadras* etc. became deities. Sage Vasistha's sons *Prathama* etc. became Saptars.

4 Taamasu: *Trishikha* became Devendra. *Satyakas, Harus, Veeras* etc. are deities. *Jyotirvyomadu* etc. became saptarshis. It was in this fourth Manvantara that Gajendramoksha happened.

5 Raivata: *Vibhu* became Devendra. *Bhutareyus* etc. became deities. *Hiranyaromudhu, Urdhvabahu, Vedasirsha* etc. became saptarshu.

6 Chakshus: *Mantradyumna* became Devendra. *Apaadyas* etc. became deities. *Havismanthudhu, Veerakudu* etc. became saptarshis. Samudra Manthan or Ksheerasagaramathanam was performed in this Manvantara.

7 Vaivasvatha: Currently this Manvantara is running. This Manu has another name as Shraddhadev. Vaivasvata Manu was also ruling during the period of Sri Suka Maharshi and King Parikshit. *Purandara* became Devendra. *Adityas, Maruts, Ashwins, Vasus, Rudras* etc. are deities. *Gautama, Kashyapa, Atri, Vishwamitra, Jamadagni, Bharadwaja and Vasishtha* were the seven.

Sri Suka Maharshi also tells King Parikshit about future Manvantaras.

8 Suryasavarni: *Bali* will become Devendra. *Sutaps, Virajas, Amritaprabhus* etc. will become deities. *Kalava, Diptimanthu, Parasurama, Ashwatthama, Kripu, Vyasa, Rishyasringa* and Saptarshu will be Saptarshis.

9 Dakshasavarni: *Adbhuta* will become Devendra. *Paradu, Marichus, Gargu* etc. will become deities. *Dyutimanthu* and others will get Saptarshi positions.

10 Brahmasavarni: *Shambhu* will become Devendra. *Vibuddhas* etc. will become deities. *Havishmantudu* and others will get Saptarshis

11 Dharmasavarni: *Vaidhruta* will become Devendra. *Vihangama, Kamagamana, Nirvanarucha* etc. will become deities. *Varunas* and others will become Saptarshis
12 Bhadrasavarni: *Ritudham* will become Devendra. *Harithas* etc. will become deities. *Tapomurthy, Tapasvi, Agneedraka* etc. get Saptarshi posts
13 Devasavarni: *Divaspati* will become Devendra. *Sukarmas, Sutraamas* etc. will become deities. *Nirmoha, Tattvadarsha* etc. will become Saptarshis
14 Indrasavarni: *Shuchi* will become Devendra. *Pavitras, Chakshus* etc. will become deities. *Agvi, Bahu, Shuchi, Shukra, Magadha* etc. will occupy Saptarshi posts.
Apart from the future Manvantaras, in the Dwadasha Skandham, Sri Suka maharshi mentions the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka while telling King Parikshit about future dynasties. He also says that the Mlechchas rule in the Indus and the country of Kashmir.

What I learned from Srimad Bhagavatam-8

Karanam Lakshminarayana Ramakumar

Ways to experience Paramatma

As we discussed earlier, Srimad Bhagavad Gita and Srimad Bhagavatam have one main thing in common. Both these are given to us by the Supreme Lord Himself. In Bhagavad Gita concept of Paramatma is condensed just in one word (Om Tatsat) by Paramatma Himself. In the same way, the Supreme Lord Himself summarized the Bhagavad-Tattva in four verses and presented to us in the Bhagavatam. Thus, these two scriptures are distinctive from others.

Similarly, Srimad-Bhagavatam shows Paramatma's penchant to make everyone aware of the Parabrahma Tattva. Even at the end of the eleventh Skandha, Lord Krishna makes this attempt while enlightening Uddhava. According to their custom, people worship the Supreme Being in a particular form and the Supreme Lord has mercy on those who imagine Paramatma in a particular form of their choice and worship Him In this mortal world, it is very difficult to concentrate on meditation of Paramatma without having any form. Therefore, the Supreme Being is enshrined in the various deity idols made by the people. Appearance is not important. Regular meditation is important. To make it possible, we have to imagine God in all these forms and meditate on Him. God is looking to see if it is possible for people to know the ways to reach Him. We can see his untiring efforts throughout Srimad Bhagavatam. As part of that effort, God shows us three more ways to reach Him.

Sri Vishnu Dandakam

As part of the Maitreya-Vidura dialogue in 7-9 adhyayas of 3rd Skandha, Maitreya describes the glories of Lord Vishnu, explaining how creation arose. As part of that, Maitrya also recites the beautiful prayer recited by Brahma of Lord Vishnu. This prayer is called Vishnu Dandakam.

Lucky for our Andhras. Potanamatya composed the Vishnu Dandakam in Telugu with great devotion in ready to chant metre. If we recite this Dandakam every day with pure concentration, we will get the grace of the Supreme.

Narayana Stotra (24th adhyaya in 4th Skandha)

Prachetas are the fourth generation of Emperor Prithu. These are ten people. Parama Shiva himself appeared and preached the Narayana Stotra to Prachetas. It is also known as Rudra Geeta. In the Sanskrit Bhagavata, this Rudra Gita has 36 verses. I am giving the complete Narayana Stotra (Rudra Gita) in Sanskrit.

श्रीरुद्र उवाच
जितं त आत्मविद्वर्य स्वस्तये स्वस्तिरस्तु मे ।
भवताराधसा राद्धं सर्वस्मा आत्मने नमः ॥३३॥
नमः पङ्कजनाभाय भूतसूक्ष्मेन्द्रियात्मने ।
वासुदेवाय शान्ताय कूटस्थाय स्वरोचिषे ॥३४॥

सङ्कर्षणाय सूक्ष्माय दुरन्तायान्तकाय च ।
नमो विश्वप्रबोधाय प्रद्युम्नायान्तरात्मने ॥३५॥
नमः परमहंसाय पूर्णाय निभृतात्मने ॥३६॥
स्वर्गापवर्गद्वाराय नित्यं शुचिषदे नमः ।
नमो हिरण्यवीर्याय चातुर्होत्राय तन्तवे ॥३७॥
नम ऊर्ज इषे त्रय्याः पतये यज्ञरेतसे ।
तृप्तिदाय च जीवानां नमः सर्वरसात्मने ॥३८॥
सर्वसत्त्वात्मदेहाय विशेषाय स्थवीयसे ।
नमस्त्रैलोक्यपालाय सह ओजोबलाय च ॥३९॥
अर्थलिङ्गाय नभसे नमोऽन्तर्बहिरात्मने ।
नमः पुण्याय लोकाय अमुष्मै भूरिवर्चसे ॥४०॥
प्रवृत्ताय निवृत्ताय पितृदेवाय कर्मणे ।
नमोऽधर्मविपाकाय मृत्यवे दुःखदाय च ॥४१॥
नमस्त आशिषामीश मनवे कारणात्मने ।
नमो धर्माय बृहते कृष्णायाकुण्ठमेधसे ॥४२॥
शक्तित्रयसमेताय मीढुषेऽहङ्कृतात्मने ।
चेतआकूतिरूपाय नमो वाचो विभूतये ॥४३॥
दर्शनं नो दिदृक्षूणां देहि भागवतार्चितम् ।
रूपं प्रियतमं स्वानां सर्वेन्द्रियगुणाञ्जनम् ॥४४॥
स्निग्धप्रावृड्घनश्यामं सर्वसौन्दर्यसङ्ग्रहम् ।
चार्वायतचतुर्बाहु सुजातरुचिराननम् ॥४५॥
पद्मकोशपलाशाक्षं सुन्दरभ्रु सुनासिकम् ।
सुद्विजं सुकपोलास्यं समकर्णविभूषणम् ॥४६॥
प्रीतिप्रहसितापाङ्गमलकै रूपशोभितम् ।
लसत्पङ्कजकिञ्जल्क दुकूलं मृष्टकुण्डलम् ॥४७॥
स्फुरत्किरीटवलय हारनूपुरमेखलम् ।
शङ्खचक्रगदापद्म मालामण्युत्तमर्द्धिमत् ॥४८॥
सिंहस्कन्धत्विषो बिभ्रत्सौभगग्रीवकौस्तुभम् ।
श्रियानपायिन्या क्षिप्त निकषाश्मोरसोल्लसत् ॥४९॥
पूररेचकसंविग्न वलिवल्गुदलोदरम् ।
प्रतिसङ्क्रामयद्विश्वं नाभ्यावर्तगभीरया ॥५०॥
श्यामश्रोण्यधिरोचिष्णु दुकूलस्वर्णमेखलम् ।
समचार्वङ्घ्रिजङ्घोरु निम्नजानुसुदर्शनम् ॥५१॥
पदा शरत्पद्मपलाशरोचिषा नखद्युभिर्नोऽन्तरघं विधुन्वता ।
प्रदर्शय स्वीयमपास्तसाध्वसं पदं गुरो मार्गगुरुस्तमोजुषाम् ॥५२॥
एतद्रूपमनुध्येयमात्मशुद्धिमभीप्सताम् ।
यद्भक्तियोगोऽभयदः स्वधर्ममनुतिष्ठताम् ॥५३॥

भवान्भक्तिमता लभ्यो दुर्लभः सर्वदेहिनाम् ।
स्वाराज्यस्याप्यभिमत एकान्तेनात्मविद्गतिः ॥५४॥
तं दुराराध्यमाराध्य सतामपि दुरापया ।
एकान्तभक्त्या को वाञ्छेत्पादमूलं विना बहिः ॥५५॥
यत्र निर्विष्टमरणं कृतान्तो नाभिमन्यते ।
विश्वं विध्वंसयन्वीर्य शौर्यविस्फूर्जितभ्रुवा ॥५६॥
क्षणार्धेनापि तुलये न स्वर्गं नापुनर्भवम् ।
भगवत्सङ्गिसङ्गस्य मर्त्यानां किमुताशिषः ॥५७॥
अथानघाङ्घ्रेस्तव कीर्तितीर्थयो रन्तर्बहिःस्नानविधूतपाप्मनाम् ।
भूतेष्वनुक्रोशसुसत्त्वशीलिनां स्यात्सङ्गमोऽनुग्रह एष नस्तव ॥५८॥
न यस्य चित्तं बहिरर्थविभ्रमं तमोगुहायां च विशुद्धमाविशत् ।
यद्भक्तियोगानुगृहीतमञ्जसा मुनिर्विचष्टे ननु तत्र ते गतिम् ॥५९॥
यत्रेदं व्यज्यते विश्वं विश्वस्मिन्नवभाति यत् ।
तत्त्वं ब्रह्म परं ज्योतिराकाशमिव विस्तृतम् ॥६०॥
यो मायया‌ेदं पुरुरूपयासृज द्बिभर्ति भूयः क्षपयत्यविक्रियः ।
यद्भेदबुद्धिः सदिवात्मदुःस्थया त्वमात्मतन्त्रं भगवन्प्रतीमहि ॥६१॥
क्रियाकलापैरिदमेव योगिनः श्रद्धान्विताः साधु यजन्ति सिद्धये ।
भूतेन्द्रियान्तःकरणोपलक्षितं वेदे च तन्त्रे च त एव कोविदाः ॥६२॥
त्वमेक आद्यः पुरुषः सुप्तशक्ति स्तया रजःसत्त्वतमो विभिद्यते ।
महानहं खं मरुदग्निवार्धराः सुरर्षयो भूतगणा इदं यतः ॥६३॥
सृष्टं स्वशक्त्येदमनुप्रविष्ट श्चतुर्विधं पुरमात्मांशकेन ।
अथो विदुस्तं पुरुषं सन्तमन्त र्भुङ्क्ते हृषीकैर्मधु सारघं यः ॥६४॥
स एष लोकानतिचण्डवेगो विकर्षसि त्वं खलु कालयानः ।
भूतानि भूतैरनुमेयतत्त्वो घनावलीर्वायुरिवाविषह्यः ॥६५॥
प्रमत्तमुच्चैरिति कृत्यचिन्तया प्रवृद्धलोभं विषयेषु लालसम् ।
त्वमप्रमत्तः सहसाभिपद्यसे क्षुल्लेलिहानोऽहिरिवाखुमन्तकः ॥६६॥
कस्त्वत्पदाब्जं विजहाति पण्डितो यस्तेऽवमानव्ययमानकेतनः ।
विशङ्कयास्मद्गुरुर्चति स्म यद् द्विनोपपत्तिं मनवश्चतुर्दश ॥६७॥
अथ त्वमसि नो ब्रह्मन्परमात्मन्विपश्चिताम् ।
विश्वं रुद्रभयध्वस्तमकुतश्चिद्भया गतिः ॥६८॥

Recitation of Rudra Gita is another tool given by Srimad- Bhagavatam to attain the closeness of God

Narayana Kavacham (8th adhyaya in 6th Skandha)

Once Devendra, in the whole assembly of Gods, ignores Guru Brihaspati and shows disrespect. Humiliated, Guru Brihaspati was sad and invoking the spiritual powers, he remained disappeared. Coming to know of disappearance of Guru Brihaspati, the demons (Rakshasas), with the help of their Guru Shukracharya, conquer the gods and occupy heaven. When Gods and Indra approach

Brahma, Brahma says that the Gods have lost heaven due to the fact that Gods at that time have no Guru or preacher (Guru Brihaspati left Heaven because of disrespect shown by Indra).
Brahma says that Gods must have a Guru to defeat the demons. He also advises Indra to request Tvashta Manu's son and Mahatapasvi, Gunasampanna Vishvarupa to be their Guru. All the deities begged Vishnarupa and Vishnarupa agreed and instructed Devendra to wear Narayana's armor. Narayana Kavacha is very influential. Narayana Kavacha is similar to and powerful as Sri Vishnu Panjara Stotram and Dwadasa Panjara Stotram.
Bammera Potanamatya has clearly given the procedure in Telugu for reciting Narayana Kavacha from avahana to udyapana.

In fact, entire Srimad Bhagavatam is a touchstone that helps to understand the divine. Each verse is a stepping stone to reach Parabrahma. It is enough to read the verses of Bhagavata continuously, whether doing anything or not. Paramatma's blessings are assured.
In the Saptamodhyam of Srimad Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna himself has blessed us.
यो यो यां यां तनुं भक्तः श्रद्धयार्चितुमिच्छति ।
तस्य तस्याचलां श्रद्धां तामेव विदधाम्यहम् ॥ ७-२१॥
If any devotee makes me feel attentive in any form, in any way, I will establish the devotee's attentiveness in that form and help him to know Me.

Everything is Sri Parabrahmaarpanamastu